

February 17, 2023

Written testimony submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Housing Committee in support of SB 4, *An Act Concerning Connecticut's Present and Future Housing Needs*.

Dear Representative Luxenberg, Senator Moore, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Sandra Wood Forand. I am a resident of Hartford and a member of Asylum Hill Congregational Church. My congregation is a member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA), a broad-based organization of 49 faith institutions working together on this issue.

I am testifying in support of a rent cap and in support of SB 4, with amendments to better protect tenants:

- A rent cap of up to 10%
- Coverage in between tenants, so landlords can't push out tenants to increase rent
- Expand good cause eviction protections so tenants have security in their homes and can't be evicted for no reason

I have heard that the rent cap language in this bill may have been removed. This angers me that the language would be removed instead of modified.

Connecticut has no current protection against huge rent increases, and sure enough, *average* rents jumped 20% in 2022, compared to annual average increases prior to the pandemic of 2.5%. This destabilizes communities and families, many of whom are pushed into homelessness. This is not right. It is also not smart for Connecticut. Most of the offending landlords are out of state investors and owners – they benefit from more income while Connecticut residents become increasingly dependent on the state. This is morally wrong, and fiscally and socially irresponsible.

This winter alone, several residents of my immediate neighborhood have been forced out of their apartments (owned by corporations) with manufactured “offenses”, at which point the landlord spikes the rent for the same unit by a huge percentage. My son and his family rent their apartment in Bloomfield, and to date have not experienced inappropriate rent increases; I attribute this to the fact that their landlord is a local investor who knows his tenants. Corporate landlords do not live in the region or even the state, and face NO consequences for their unscrupulous behavior. This is who should be targeted by this legislation.

Removing rent caps from SB 4 may please the landlords who are fair, but it also allows these bad actors to take egregious advantage of the least powerful citizens, destabilizing our communities and costing the state money in social supports and homelessness. This makes no sense to me.

Rent caps have worked in other states and municipalities, serving to stabilize families and communities while protecting landlords' business model. This policy is designed to protect Connecticut renters from predatory and corporate landlords who impose *egregious and extractive rent increases*. Rent-gouging disproportionately targets and displaces Black, Indigenous, and immigrant community members, which is my primary motivation in supporting this legislation.

I strongly support SB 4 but with these changes:

- **the rent cap language should be replaced**, at any reasonable level.
- **It should cover apartments in between tenants** so landlords can't push out tenants to increase the rent; this has been happening in my immediate neighborhood.
- **It should expand good-cause eviction protections** to cover all tenants so they have greater stability in their homes.

Sincerely,

Sandra Wood Forand
Hartford CT